

DISTRICT COURT
THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT
STATE OF IDAHO

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FOR
ADAMS, CANYON, GEM, OWYHEE,
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**2008 Family Court Services Activity Report
Third Judicial District**

Population growth and demand for family court services in the Third District continues to increase. Third District Family Court Services has responded by providing a wide range of services to meet the needs of families and the court. Not only is the Third district the second most active district in Idaho, families living in the district have the lowest per capita income in the state.

Parenting Apart Education (Focus on Children): Each month, the Third District provides seven Focus on Children parenting apart classes. Four classes are offered monthly in Canyon County. These classes are offered in the afternoon and in the evening for working parents. Canyon County classes serve parents with cases pending in Canyon, Gem or Owyhee counties. Adams, Payette, and Washington County parents with child custody issues are offered two classes per month, alternating between Payette and Washington Counties. The Third Judicial District also provides a monthly class in Spanish. The Third District's Court Interpreter's office is working with Family Court Services to translate all written information into Spanish and these translations will be distributed to Family Courts statewide. Over 1700 parents and 2600 children are positively impacted annually by the districts education program.

Mediation: Third District Family Court Services facilitated and tracked nearly 500 mediations as an alternative (to court) dispute resolution tool in the past year. The majority of these mediations resulted in cases being resolved without trial. Even in those cases where mediation does not result in an agreement, mediation helped narrow the issues which the judge has to address at trial. In over 100 of these cases, parents received some percentage of grant assistance for mediation services. Third District Family Court Services has instituted a strict application process to assure that only the truly needy cases receive assistance. This has reduced the number parents seeking and obtaining assistance.

Supervised Access (professionally supervised visitation): Facilities have benefited from training and support through Family Court Services. In the past, families needing professional supervised access had to travel to Boise for this service. Now two more facilities are available in Nampa and Caldwell. Approximately six dissolution/custody case families (and many more Child Protection case families) each month are served by these three facilities with an average of five cases per month in which funding assistance is provided through Family Court Services. As a result of this assistance, approximately 8 dissolution case children every month and many other children in

the Child Protection system are afforded access to a parent in a safe environment with whom they would otherwise not have safe access.

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR): In cases where mediation is not appropriate, Family Court Services provided alternative processes. These included 8 Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) screenings, 11 Family Needs Assessments, Case Screenings and 4 Limited Focus Child Interviews.

Parenting Coordinators: The highest conflict families are often those who utilize litigation at a disproportionate rate to resolve their parenting issues. These parents may be required to access to a Parenting Coordinator to assist them to co-parent and to make decisions for them when they are unable to do so. Family Court Services provides ongoing support and development for those professionals in this demanding role with monthly meetings for Parenting Coordinators in the 3rd and 4th District.

Guardian Ad Litem (GAL): Third District continues to engage in the Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) pilot project with funding provided by the CFCC. In this fiscal year, 15 cases have been resolved where a GAL was appointed to assist with tough custody issues and 3 cases are pending. The judges have found this tool to be essential in cases where with high conflict custody issues for poverty level families. Family Court Services will work with the CFCC to further define and develop standards of practice for the Dissolution/Custody Case GAL program.

Informal Alternative Custody Trials (formerly known as Family Law Arbitration Pilot Project or FLAPP): These are being tested with several judges in the Third Judicial District. This innovative program started in the First Judicial District and is beginning to be utilized in the Third District with approximately 10 cases tried. Some very positive outcomes have been reported by Judges and attorneys.

Focus on Children Workshop for Pro Se Litigants: Over 50% of all dissolution cases in the Third District involving children are filed pro se. Family Court Services has partnered with the Court Assistance Office to offer a comprehensive Focus on Children Workshop for Pro Se litigants providing file review, parenting apart education and professional mediation services. Our goal is to keep the cost of this workshop at \$20 for each parent and fees collected from all Focus on Children classes will help supplement the Pro Se Workshop in FY2009. This workshop will address the problems that pro se litigants meet and will reduce the work load they create for the courts.

Children and Families in the Courts Committee's assistance with services for low income families are essential in helping resolve child custody issues. The CFCC support is greatly appreciated in the Third Judicial District.